APPENDIX A — THE HISTORY OF TATTOOING

Tattooing was "invented" independently in many places throughout the world, reflecting a universal tendency for human beings to inscribe their bodies with meaningful signs that convey their social, cultural and individual identity.[1] Moreover, all of the permanent forms of marking the body, including tattooing, scarification, body shaping, and piercing that are found in the ancient world, continue in cultures around the world to the present day. In the societies where these practices occur, they are considered to be defining marks of humanity as well as specific signs of identity and individuality.

Tattooing has been abandoned in many parts of the world during the past four centuries, as Western ideas about the body have taken over. Clothing, ornaments, and other signs of status replaced tattooing as the primary means of indicating identity. Nevertheless anthropologists and historians have been able to gather information about various non-western tattoo practices from archaeological and ethnographic sources, including artworks that depict tattooing or that share the same aesthetic vocabulary as tattooing. Such artworks were a major component of the exhibition *Body Art: Marks of Identity* held at The American Museum of Natural History, November, 1999-June 2000.

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1. Scarification is similar to tattooing in that it involves the insertion of pigment and other substances under the skin. It was traditionally more common among dark skinned peoples in Africa and Melanesia. The tendency of skin with high melanin content to form colloids made this form of body decoration more popular in these regions. Decorative patterns of scars can also contain pigment to darken the skin. Today scarification is dying out in most parts of the world, while tattooing is increasingly popular with Black people in the United States.

Appendix A

Archaeological data include actual mummies bearing tattoos, tools for practicing tattooing and tomb paintings with images of tattooed people. Ceramic vessels and sculptures depict tattooing and scarification. Preserved textiles from ancient tombs have been found with depictions of decorated humans and with woven designs identical to body decoration. Even in ancient times body art was part of an aesthetic vocabulary that went across media — from ceramics to textiles to wall paintings to skin.

Along with symbolic speech, the capacity to create art, including body decoration, can be said to be the distinguishing characteristic of the human species. While there are no extant records of speech among the earliest humans, there is evidence of symbolic communication through art, including body art. The earliest evidence of art, dating to at least 30,000 B.P. (Before Present), consists of cave paintings, carved implements, and pigments that were probably used for body painting and possibly for tattooing. Many of the earliest cave paintings known, in North and South America, Europe, and Africa, include images of decorated bodies. Some of the earliest mummies known, found in Siberia (5th century B.C.), in western China (1st millennia B.C.), the Alps (c. 3300 B.C.) wear body paint and tattoos. The central Asian mummies show that at least 3000 years ago the skin of Caucasoid peoples in central Asia was decorated with rams, antelopes, and horses. Similar designs were woven into their textiles. Cave paintings and gold ornaments depict the same animals, reflecting the importance of these creatures in their material and spiritual lives. In Egypt, mummies from the 2nd millennium B.C, tomb paintings, and statuary show that female tattooing was associated with fertility. *See* Robert S. Bianchi, *Tattoo in Ancient Egypt* in *Marks of Civilization: Artistic Transformation of the Human Body 21* (A Rubin ed.1988). Images of Bes, a fertility God, appear as tattoos on the abdomens of figurines. Whether on sculptures, tomb

paintings, textiles, or on the body, ancient artists drew the symbols and ideas that were most meaningful to them.

While the archaeological record provides only a partial record of the many body art practices that have occurred throughout the world, it nevertheless demonstrates that peoples of all of the major populated regions of the world used body art in much the way modern and historic peoples have done. Among its many meanings, body art and especially tattooing, has been used to express identification with certain people and distinction from others. Such visible identification through body art enabled the members of a group to express their feelings of identity and standards of beauty. Simultaneously, others could see at a glance the ethnic group, gender and social status of the people with whom they interacted. The archaeological record also shows that over the centuries, as societies became increasingly complex and centralized, body art also became more complex because of the need to symbolize authority and signify an ever-greater number of roles and statuses. Rulers and nobles adorned themselves with symbols that helped define their position and authority. While jewelry and clothing were among the many symbols of status and identity, in the past, as today, the archaeological record demonstrates that tattooing was used as a marker of social status, identity, and individuality in many past cultures.

ETHNOGRAPHIC AND ETHNO-HISTORICAL SOURCES

Tattooing has meaning both to those who practice it and to those who repudiate it. Its highly charged capacity to communicate important social messages of inclusion and exclusion, and to highlight differences between cultures and sub-cultures, leads to strong sentiments on the part of both practitioners and non-tattooed observers. In some cultures and segments of society, and especially in the West, tattoo has been seen as exotic, bizarre, and uncivilized. Indeed,

until very recently, most descriptions of tattooing were written by people who did not practice it. The Greeks associated tattooing with their barbarian enemies, the Thracians, and the Romans followed them adopting the word *stigma* to describe body markings. *See* C. P. Jones, *Stigma and Tattoo* in *Written on the Body: The Tattoo in European and American History 1* (J. Caplan ed. 2000) and Mark Gustafson, *The Tattoo in the Later Roman Empire and Beyond* in Caplan, at 17-31.

When Europeans first encountered Indians in North America, tattoos featured prominently in their descriptions. These accounts were used to justify colonization and conversion of the Indians to Christianity. Two centuries later, the 1769 voyage of Captain Cook to the Pacific (not published until 1893), provided rich descriptions of the varied tattooing traditions of the Polynesians, but these accounts too expressed shock at the practice.

Nevertheless, anthropologists, historians, and art historians who have become increasingly interested in this subject are now able to show that the meaning of tattooing to those who practice it, in the West and elsewhere, is quite different from what it would appear to be if one relied only on the accounts of outsiders — in which tattoo is seen simply as a form of social deviance and non-conformity. In a classic study by the anthropologist Alfred Gell, comparing tattooing practices in different Polynesian societies, tattooing is described as a "social skin." *See* Alfred Gell, *Wrapping in Images: Tattooing in Polynesia* (1993). It played a key role in the social construction of the person. The body is used as a canvas to communicate messages about status, individuality, and a person's place in society. In most societies, tattoo designs were carefully prescribed (and proscribed), as was all art, in conformity with aesthetic standards and accepted symbolic meanings. Tattoos could confer political status, either marking high or low status. Among the Maori, for instance, in the past, only high status people underwent the painful

process of tattooing [Maori tattooing involved incising the skin]. In Japan, persons in certain occupations were tattooed, but they used tattoo to express relative status within their ranks, with the finest full body tattoos deserving of the most admiration and respect (and costing the most).

TATTOOS MARK PASSAGES AND EVENTS IN A PERSON'S LIFE

Tattoos in many societies were used to mark passages in a person's life, from childhood to adulthood, or special accomplishments such as exploits as a warrior or shaman. Gender was often differentiated through tattoos, with women, for example, in parts of Africa, receiving tattoos to mark their readiness for child bearing, or commemorating a birth. Tattooing could also be used to mark special occupational groups, as was the case in Japan where firefighters received special tattoos. And as we know from Western society, tattoos are often used to mark identification with certain sub-groups, either formally, as in fraternity tattoos, or with certain sub-groups of society. In many societies, including in the United States today, tattoos are used to record and affirm particular individual accomplishments. Among Plains Indians in North America, tattooing was often accompanied by a vision quest. The pain of receiving a tattoo was part of the spiritual exercise. Western tattoos also often affirm individual accomplishments, for instance a sailor's travels, a soldier's wartime accomplishments, special relationships to loved ones, and memories.

BODY ART AS A SIGN OF BEING CIVILIZED

Until Westernization and Christian missionaries prohibited tattooing in many parts of the world, people in many societies regarded tattooing and scarification, as well as other forms of permanent body modification, as signs of their humanity. A person was not considered fully socialized unless he or

she had undergone some form of body modification that distinguished human beings from uncivilized nature — from animals, for example, or from spirits of the wilderness. The Luba of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, among many other African people, believed a woman was not ready for marriage and child bearing until she had undergone scarification. Abdominal marks in elaborate patterns were signs of adulthood, fertility, and community membership and were also considered beautiful and sexually attractive. An unmarked woman was compared to a fish or a melon. *See* M. Nooter and A. F. Roberts, *Memory: Luba Art and the Making of History* (1996). The Baule people of Côte d'Ivoire, once regarded people without marks as being "of the bush," more like wild animals than civilized humans. *See* Susan Vogel, *Baule Scarification: The Mark of Civilization* in Rubin, *supra*, at 97-106.

The Tiv people of Nigeria said that adults who had not shaped their incisor teeth, another common body modification, were unable to "weave their words." *See* Paul Bohannan, *Beauty and Scarification Amongst the Tiv* in Rubin at *77-83.*

Many Native Americans regarded tattooing as a sign of accomplishment, such as bravery in war or an indication that a person had completed a spiritual quest. Images of specific animals, both real and mythical (such as the Thunderbird) indicated both family relationships and relationships with spirits. Arduous rituals accompanied these spirit quests and tattoos were part of the ritual as well as commemorations of the relationships. The display of this body art was a way for a person to communicate his or her status in society. The same images appeared on other objects, today considered to be great art: totem poles, masks, and textiles.

Appendix A

BODY ART AS VISUAL COMMUNICATION

Body art, including tattoos, can be understood as a visual language, but like all languages the signs and symbols are culturally specific. To understand the images in tattoo, one needs to know the vocabulary, including the shared symbols, myths, and social values that they express. While an anchor, a heart, a cross, or the word "MOM", is clear to most Westerners, this is only because of the shared cultural language they express. Elaborately pictorial Japanese tattooing started among men in certain occupational groups and depicts the exploits of a hero drawn from a Chinese epic called *Suikoden*. *See* A. Kitamura and K. Kitamura, *Bushido: Legacies of the Japanese Tattoo* (2001). The tattoos have more meaning to those who know the stories underlying the images than they do to people unfamiliar with the tales. Northwest Coast American Indian tattoos once depicted the relationships that members of specific families had with protective spiritual ancestors who were envisioned in animal form. Today such tattoos, along with Celtic signs and symbols, are adopted by Westerners who see them as signs of their longing for what they see as a simpler life.

Among some groups in central Borneo, including Kayan, Kenyah, and Iban people, tattoos were considered protective. Tattoo designs were considered so powerful that while women did, and in some places still do, the actual tattooing, only men were considered powerful enough to draw the designs. Tattoo pattern stamps were carved only by men whose souls were considered strong enough to handle the design's spiritual power. Designs including *aso*, or dragon-dog, serpentine scrolls and geometric patterns shielded people from harmful spirits believed to inhabit Borneo's rainforests. Some motifs were meant to cure illness and pain, particularly at arm or leg joints.

Appendix A

CHANGING MEANINGS OF TATTOO

The meaning of such practices shifts as designs and ornaments move across cultural boundaries. Maori tattoos in New Zealand, for example, now convey ethnic, rather than specific local tribal identities or high status in the traditional ranking system. When Borneo-style tattoos are adopted in the West this reflects a search for a connection to what is perceived to be a simpler way of life. The original meanings of particular designs, or the protective function of tattoos, may not be relevant in their new context, but the wearers and makers of such tattoos can and do attribute complex, if novel, meanings to them. In a world of increasing global communication, tattoo designs and motifs are adopted, shared, and reinterpreted as they move between cultures. The appropriation, imitation, and transformation of designs, motifs and materials are part of a continuous dialogue that goes on between cultures.

TATTOO ARTISTS AS SPECIALISTS

In all cultures, tattooists are specialists, as were carvers, weavers, musicians, and other accomplished artists. Becoming a tattoo artist involves a long process of training and apprenticeship. While anyone can make a mark in their skin and put pigment inside it, tattoos that are socially recognized and valued are expected to meet aesthetic standards and confer both beauty and meaning.

TATTOOING AS A CONSENSUAL COLLABORATIVE ACT

Tattooing is different from some but not all other art forms in that it is a collaborative act involving a consensus on the part of the tattoo artist and the recipient who offers his or her body as a canvas. There are instances in which tattooed marks (or brands) have been imposed on a person by

others — as for example the numbers inscribed on concentration camp victims by the Nazis in World War II, the brands put on slaves, or even the *stigmata* in early Christianity - but these marks cannot be considered tattoos as art in the sense discussed here. *See* Jones, *supra,* at 10. The tattoo artist cannot practice without the consent of the recipient and the recipient is thus part of the creative process. There are many forms of art in which this is the case. A composer who writes a symphony orchestra, a playwright, a screenwriter, or a choreographer, all rely on collaborations with others to realize their art. Tattoo should be seen in the same way — it is a creative composition requiring both a recipient and an artist. While after the work is completed the artist can be separated from the canvas, in creating the work, there has to be a consensual collaboration between the tattooist and the recipient of the tattoo.

APPENDIX B — TATTOO EXHIBITIONS AT MAJOR MUSEUMS

1971 **The Museum of American Folk Art,** New York. *Tattoo!*

1980 **Peabody Essex Museum,** *Salem, Ma. The Art of the Japanese Tattoo.*

1983 **The New Museum of Contemporary Art,** New York. *Jamie Summers: Metamorphic Rite.*

1985 **Marcato di Triani,** Rome. Exhibition curated by Ed Hardy, *L'asino e la Zebra*

1995 **The Drawing Center,** New York City. *Pierced Hearts and True Love: A Century of Drawings for Tattoos.* The exhibition also traveled to Williams College Museum of Art in Williamstown, Massachusetts (Sept.-Nov. 1996), the Joan Lehman Museum of Contemporary Art, Miami (Dec.-March 1996), and the Center for the Arts at Yerba Buena Gardens, San Francisco, (June-Aug. 1996), the Contemporary Art Center, Cincinnati, OH; Vancouver Art Museum, Vancouver, B.C.; Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton, Alberta.

1995 **The South Street Seaport Museum,** The Devil's Blue American Tattoo Art and Practice Through the Port of New York; The South Street Seaport Museum

1997 **Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art,** Colorado. *Art and Provocation: Images from Rebels*

1998 **Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art,** Colorado. *Some Weird Beauty*

1998 **The Mariner's Museum,** Newport, Virginia. *Skin Deep: The Art of the Tattoo.*

Appendix B

1999 **The South Street Seaport Museum**, New York. *American Tattoo: The Art of Gus Wagner.*

1999 **The American Museum of Natural History**, New York. *Body Art: Marks of Identity.*

1999. **Museum of Anthropology. University of Pennsylvania**. Body Art on-line.

2000 **The Victoria and Albert Museum**, London, England "Day of Record" April 29, 2000 attended by more than 1500 people.

2000. **The Australian National Museum**. *Body Art.* This exhibition traveled to the South Australian Museum (Adelaide), the Melbourne Museum, the Queensland Museum (Brisbane), the Newcastle Regional Museum, the Auckland War memorial museum, and the Australian Museum ("Body Art II").

2002. **National Maritime Museum**, Greenwich, England. *Skin Deep: A History of Tattooing.*

2002. **The Pitt-Rivers Museum of Anthropology**, Oxford University, Oxford, England. Permanent exhibition, *Body Arts* on April 20, 2002.

APPENDIX C — SCHOLARLY SYMPOSIA ON THE ART OF TATTOOING:

1983. A symposium entitled *Arts of the Body* was held at **The Fowler Museum of Cultural History at UCLA**. *Marks of Civilization: Artistic Transformations of the Human Body* edited by Arnold Rubin is an anthology of articles presented at the symposium. Participants included art historians and anthropologists including the late Arnold Rubin (Art Historian, UCLA), Susan Vogel (Art Historian, Director of The Museum For African Art, New York City); James Faris, Anthropologist, The University of Connecticut; Adrienne Kaeppler, Anthropologist, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, and others.

2000 **The American Museum of Natural History** in New York City held a day-long public symposium on March 18, 2000. "The Changing World of Tattoo: A Panel Discussion" moderated by Anne Fitzgerald included tattoo artists Lyle Tuttle, tattoo artist, art collector and creator of the Tattoo Art Museum and Hall of Fame, Ukiah, CA, Pat Sinatra, writer, lecturer and tattoo artist, Woodstock, NY; Ed Hardy, tattoo artist, writer and curator, San Francisco, CA; Keone Nunes, lecturer on Hawaiian culture and traditional Polynesian tattooist, Wai'anae, HA.; Mike McCabe, writer, cultural anthropologist and tattoo artist, New York City, NY; Chuck Eldridge, tattoo artist, writer, archivist and historian, Berkeley, CA; Jacci Gresham, tattoo artist, New Orleans, LA; Sean Vasquez, tattoo artist, New York City, NY; Michelle Myles, tattoo artist, New York City, NY.

2000 **The American Museum of Natural History** held a lecture series in conjunction with the Body Art exhibition featuring talks by scholars including historians Jane Caplan, Dorothy Ko, Valerie Steele, Enid Schildkrout and Daniel Wojcik, anthropologists.

Appendix C

2001 **The South Street Seaport Museum**. Inaugural lecture for Gus Wagner exhibit, given by Anne Fitzgerald, Senior Researcher, American Museum of Natural History.

2002 **The Metropolitan Museum of Art**, in conjunction with the exhibition *Extreme Beauty* held a symposium that included a lecture by Ann Fitzgerald, Senior Researcher at The American Museum of Natural History, on tattoo.

2002 **Tulane University**, *Embodied Identities: Body Art, Culture, and the Material World.* The Henry Stern Lecture, given by Dr. Enid Schildkrout.

2002. **The Pitt Rivers Museum** in Oxford, England, held a conference on *Body Arts and Modernity.* Scholars from the disciplines of anthropology, history and art history gathered to consider the topic which was described as follows: "Anthropologists have written much about the elaborate body arts traditionally practiced in different parts of the world. They have shown how what, in the West, is often considered to be a merely superficial aesthetic form is in reality deeply implicated in indigenous politics and cosmology, in morality and in the constitution of self. Much less attention has been given to the degree to which body arts today intersect with, are revitalized by, or constituted through, modernity and modern practices. The purpose of the colloquium is to interrogate this issue, drawing upon case studies from throughout the world."

2002 **The University of Iowa**. *The Cultured Body: African Fashion and Body Arts* (October 2002).